

House Bill 4004 - Letters of Support

Dear Representative Dian Slavens

I am the Early On Coordinator in Van Buren County. I was very excited when I saw that we may have an opportunity to get additional funds for Early On through this very attractive license plate!

Every EO program in Michigan will benefit from the plate. First, it raises awareness and helps us with child find, and second we have all gone public on there is not enough federal funding in the system to fund all we need to do in Early On. We continue to try and serve children and families with shrinking budgets.

Thank you for your interest in Early On!

Cecilia Norcross
Early On Coordinator
Van Buren County
269-539-5128 Office
269-625-7884 Cell

Representative Dian Slavens,

I am writing in regard to the creation of a Early On license plate. My name is Janeen Mills and I am employed at Tuscola Intermediate School District. I have been with the district for 35 years and the last 20 of them I have been the Early On Coordinator for Tuscola County along with teaching Special Education Preschool and now I am a Infant Intervention

Teacher (seeing our Early On children in their homes). I can say with confidence that I have one of the most important jobs at our ISD. I meet with families and develop a relationship with them that will set the stage for their child's educational path for the rest of their lives. That is what Early On is all about meeting a family when they are most vulnerable with so many unanswered questions. Helping them to help their child and strengthen themselves in the process becoming more confident parents.

Early On saves the educational system money by helping children with their development early in their lives and in many cases eliminating the need for special education later in their life. As important a role as Early On plays is so many lives it is a program that is greatly underfunded. So I encourage you to support the development of a Early On license plate that will help to raise much needed funds for our programs.

Sincerely, Janeen Mills

Early On is a system of services that assesses and monitors development in children from birth to age three who either have a qualifying developmental delay or a health condition that may put them at risk for a delay. There is no cost for the evaluation and participation in Early On® is voluntary. Pending written consent, services range from assessment and monitoring of development, providing developmental information, referral to community programs or evaluation and referral for speech therapy, occupational and physical therapy, or other services, if needed.

Early On identifies children early so they can get the help they need before they are even preschool age. Early intervention helps children gain the skills necessary to be successful when they start school. It also ensures that necessary supports will be in place from the first day of school. By getting help early, some children are able to start school without special education services.

An Early On license plate would provide additional funding to crucial Early On programs throughout the state and assist in raising public awareness about Early On programs and services.

Bonita Suter
Lawrence, MI

Dear Representative Dian Slavens (Michigan Legislature),

Thank you for your support of the Early On Michigan License plate. The license plate will benefit all Early On Programs across the state by:

1. Raising public awareness of the Early On Program
2. Identifying more eligible children
3. Providing families support and education as they help their children grow and learn
4. Decreasing later need for special education services
5. Supplementing inadequate federal funding

Thank you the time and energy you have devoted to this very special project.

Diane Rushlow, MA, RN-BC

Wayne County Department of Public Health
Children's Special Health Care Services / Early On Program Coordinator



Address:

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To Whom it may concern;

I am writing to you today to show my support for Early On of Michigan. I feel Early On is a great program that has the potential to help many families in the State of Michigan. It helped me so much when my twins were born. I would like to share my story with you.

I became pregnant in August of 2008, shortly after that I found out that I was pregnant with twins. Although I was going to be a second time mom, it was a whole new world to me when they were born nearly 6 weeks early. My fraternal twins were born at 34 weeks and 3 days and suffered respiratory distress so they were shipped out to a nearby NICU. While we were in the NICU the nurses kept telling us that our babies could suffer from developmental delays. I didn't know what to think or do at that point. After 2 weeks in the NICU the babies were discharged and sent home. I was overjoyed yet at the same time I was scared to death, they were finally home but now what do I do? There weren't any nurses at my house to answer my questions! This is where Early On came into our lives.

One morning I received a call from a local Early On specialist offering to come out to the house once a month and assess the babies to make sure that they are developing appropriately. I was so relieved to be able to have someone come to my house and visit with me and the kids, answer any questions I may have and let me know if my babies are developing the way they should be. From her very first visit Laurie Anderson reassured me that the babies were doing well and on track for their adjusted age. She explained everything to me including what an adjusted age was. She came every month until my children aged out of the program. When the twins turned 2 we discussed the idea of my daughter having a speech delay, and without Laurie coming to the house every month I may not have even realized that she had a speech delay. She referred us to a local speech therapist who then came to evaluate her, and she did in fact need speech therapy services.

When the children turned 3 years old they aged out of the program, but we never lost contact with Laurie Anderson. Connor and Olivia developed such a strong bond with her that they still love going to see her, and even though the kids have been out of the Early On program for over a year now I can still run concerns by her to see what she thinks I should do. Participating in the Early On program helped me out in more ways than I ever could have imagined, not only did the kids love playing with Laurie, I also looked forward to her coming to the house so I could actually talk to another adult. She was a great source of information regarding twins also because she herself has twins. She had been through all the things that I was currently going through, and offered up tips and tricks to dealing with the daily struggles of raising twins.

Thank you for taking the time to read about my experience with the Early On program.

Carla Jermalowicz

Early on is an amazing program. My son has cerebral palsy and has been receiving early on therapy since he was around 3 months (he is now 19 months) they have been amazing . They have been extremely helpful and important resource for my family. They deserve all the support they can get.

Katie Reid

It was always great that Michigan was one of very few states that recognized that if special education was needed for infants and toddlers (birth to three), then we would provide it. But it was even better when Early On came on board in January of 1993 to say all states will serve this population. Now research has shown that Early Intervention is the key to success. In fact, that birth to three time frame is when a person learns the most and changes the most. It is when we can have the most influence. That is also the time families need the most support.

I was a teacher consultant with the Early Intervention Diagnostic Center through Detroit Public Schools for seven years before moving north to Iosco County in January, 1993. I continued my work with this age group joining forces with the Early On Coordinator. In 2007 our Early On Coordinator became ill and I continued this important role. The collaboration with other agencies is awesome. Every year new ideas and new opportunities make themselves available, but the funding just goes down.

Any help is good help and anything that can be done to keep our Early On programs going strong is a plus. Help keep our families be the strongest supporters of their children.

Thank you for your time,

Sincerely,

Julie Anne Doherty, Early On Coordinator, Iosco RESA

Dear Representative Dian Slavens,

I am writing today in support of HB 4004 which would create a license plate for *Early On* Michigan. My family used the services of Early On for the first few years of my son's life. They were instrumental in helping him achieve the developmental milestones that he has in spite of his Mitochondrial Disorder. They were also an empowering support for our whole family as we navigated the brand new (to us then) special needs world. A license plate would not only help support their efforts but also bring awareness to the invaluable services *Early On* Michigan provides to the community. Please vote yes on HB 4004.

Thank you,

Nina Van Harn
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May 14, 2013

RE: **House Bill 4004** : *Early On* License Plate

Representative Dian Slavens
Michigan Legislature
P.O. Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Representative Slavens:

I would like to share my enthusiastic support for the passage of House Bill 4004 for the creation of an *Early On* License Plate. As you know, *Early On* Michigan provides services to families of infants and toddlers, ages birth to three, who demonstrate a developmental delay, or are at risk for developmental delays due to an underlying medical condition.

I have had the great privilege of serving on the Michigan Interagency Coordinating Council, where you and I have had the opportunity to talk about the importance of early diagnosis of developmental conditions (including autism), and the important role that early intervention can play to shape subsequent developmental trajectories. As a Developmental Pediatrician at Mott Children's Hospital, where I serve as the medical director of the Neonatal Follow-up Program and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Clinic, and see young children with developmental disorders, I have seen first-hand how families benefit from the receipt of early intervention services. The developmental science literature has demonstrated how early intervention is instrumental in shaping early brain development, and is especially instrumental for infants at biological and developmental risk. *Early On* provides needed developmental therapies to children in the context of the least restricted environment, and more importantly, utilizes a "family centered approach" in which parents become an integral part of their child's developmental progress. Through the *Early On* approach, children receive individualized services from trained professionals, and parents are taught the strategies to help their children reach their developmental potential.

As a pediatrician serving medically fragile and complex children, I am grateful to the *Early On* professionals who provide family-centered, developmentally sensitive care to the high-risk children I see. I am asking for your support for House Bill 4004, for the creation of an *Early On* License Plate, to raise awareness regarding the need for services and supports for Michigan's at-risk infants and toddlers. Because current federal funding is not adequate to meet the needs of eligible infants and toddlers and their families, the *Early On* license plate would provide additional revenue to support quality intervention for our youngest, most vulnerable children.

Thank you so much for your consideration, and for being a tireless advocate for the needs of young children and their families.

Warmest regards,

Prachi Shah, MD

Prachi Shah, MD
Assistant Professor, Pediatrics
Mott Children's Hospital
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor

Dear, Representative Devin Slawano

I am a Grandparent of a little

Boy who was fortunate enough
to be in the Early On program.

When he first started he could
not speak clearly enough to be
understood would not sit and
listen to do anything for any
length of time. At the time my

Daughter and 6 grandchildren were

living with me.

It was totally amazing how the
Early On person worked with him
he loved it and looked forward

to every visit.
He now speaks clearly and loves
Books and doing crafts.

Something that would not have been
without The Kind, Dedicated, hard-
working people of Early On!

Sincerely,

Nancy Hayes

Representative Slavins and Michigan Legislature,

I am a little late but no a bit less sincere in saying that Early On has been a very important aspect of my son's early years. His name is Jack and he is now 11 ½ years old. He was born with Septo Optic Dysplasia and needed early intervention services as early as 3 months of age. The Early On process was respectful, dignified, helpful and beneficial to both Jack and my husband and I as we came to terms with Jack's unknown developmental future. Because Early On helped us get the help he needed at an early age and supported us, we got off to a "good start." He was able to eat better, play appropriately, and bond with us with the guidance of our home visitor. He considers to have challenges today but we were able to face them at a young age and intervene to maximize his development.

Attached are a few photos of Jack over the years, including a photo with his Early On home visitor, attending therapeutic horseback riding and our family. Please consider the Early On license plate and consider our positive experiences. Kids like Jack and families like ours need Early On's help.

Thank you for your consideration,
Sarah Kugler
2130 Burchard SE
Grand Rapids, MI 49506









